

**Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Operations Committee Minutes
October 11, 2024**

Approved by Operations
Committee

November 13, 2024

Board Members Present: Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Razell Ward, Secretary; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member/Youth Committee Chair; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment; Chris Winstead, Treasurer/Chair of Resources

Absent: Patti Saarinen, EMDC

Others Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant; Sara McLaughlin, Financial Analyst

Call to Order

Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 8:36am.

Review and Approval of the Last Meeting Minutes

Voted: Approval of the August 14, 2024, meeting minutes.

Motion: Grant Provost **Second:** Laurie Glidden **Vote:** All present in favor

Provider Report-

Patti was unavailable for the meeting so Erin gave a brief overview of Patti's report and will send the report to everyone for review.

Erin stated that we are ahead of adults via the implementation schedule for the year. Due to the 90-day delay there is a guessing game for the carry in numbers for the quarter. Despite the goal being 100 they came in at 117, with 51 new enrollments in the first quarter. Dislocated workers carry in numbers were a little lower with only 30 reported for the first quarter. Youth carry in were also lower and they were very close to the enrollment numbers.

The Quest grant was supposed to be signed October 2022, but we didn't get the contract until mid-February, and we've gotten an extension with a total goal of 158 and they're currently at 94. They continue to work on many different programs. Erin recently met with Susan Cerini and told her about her concerns with the Quest budget. They've been asking for drawdowns weekly and what will be left over if they stay on the same number requests, which she follows closely. She feels that the rest of the time they have they will reach the goal without having leftover money.

She feels that the youth campaign will increase youth numbers as well. Cathy asked if the low employment rate is having effects on the numbers being reported. Erin agrees that this plays a part and that the number of open jobs and the number of people working needs to improve as there are plenty of open positions for those not working due to barriers and the need to remove those barriers is vital for this to move forward.

Financial Report-Sara

Sara shared her screen to show everyone the budget while she reviewed it. She reviewed the changes since the last meeting and where we are relative to spending on each contract. First the Career contract was fully spent out, but Ginny Carroll asked for additional work and offered additional funding and an extension for that work. EMDC opted to take \$8,725 and our administration is limited to 10% of what they take with a year to spend it.

Both Quest and ARPA have been given no cost extensions that Sara mentioned would happen for a few months now, she rearranged the contracts by date of those we need to spend out first. On last years WIOA funds on the administrative side we have spent almost all of them out, EMDC has just ramped spending on this after spending out PY22. Career was spent out but now there is a small amount given by Ginny for additional work to spend. Quest is at 62% on the admin side and 35% for EMDC which Erin talked about their spending on that. EMDC is not part of ARPA, so we are managing both the administrative and program funds of that, and we are at 9% of that. We are still spending out last year's WIOA contract and have not yet started spending on this year's contract but have until 2026 to spend it. Erin wanted to remind people that ARPA will go quickly with the CBO grants now that Quest is spent, and this funding is paying for the marketing campaign within the next 2-3 weeks through March. It is \$30,000 off the top and the transportation grant will begin as well.

The line-item budget for the local board was discussed. We were awarded a small amount of additional funds, but she added it to next year's budget since our budget this year was already complete. We did not receive the WANTO grant so that was removed from the budget. Our budget is \$474,000 with 25% of the budget through September and we are at 13% currently. The numbers are skewed with the large CBO mini grants, which is a big portion of the budget. Looking at individual line items everything is looking good with a few front-loaded items that appear like subscriptions and renewals.

Updates

- **WIOA Partner Workshop:** The WIOA Partner workshop on September 27th was a huge success with 92 people attending from all areas and programs within our region. The commissioner was present as well as Cathy to provide a welcome to the attendees. There was a seating assignment to ensure that someone from all areas was sitting together to collaborate, a Bridges out of Poverty presentation and then speed 7-minute overview of programs. Per the evaluation that was sent out the takeaway across the board is that everyone enjoyed meeting other partners and learning about resources from other programs and how to work together. Many people said they want an event like this annually and that an end of day parking lot Q&A would be beneficial. Carrie and Marianne Young are working on a Partnering Checklist that will go out to everyone to provide a service guide that will show everyone who has services they may be looking for like training, tuition assistance, childcare, etc. Carrie shared her screen to provide everyone with a look at the draft checklist for review.
- **Reauthorization:** The Senate was working on this, but it is done for now with the elections and will be picked up again after the elections. Erin did meet with Collins office to discuss concerns and chose her due to appropriations and reauthorizations.
- **DOC/CDL-A Update:** We have been working on this program with the DOC, but they decided to create their own program. The jails do not have any programs like this and they are in need of them. Erin is working with Kelly and Sam on creating programs for apprenticeships. Chris would

like to discuss this further with Erin around funding and opportunities that the college system can assist with.

- **IFA Update:** Erin thought we were close with the budget until she received a new MDOL budget. She splits their budget as it is for the information center and who pays for it. She split the costs based on who lives there and who doesn't. She continues to work on this.
- **WORC/WANTO/ARPA:** The WORC grant was not awarded to the Manufacturing Association of Maine, but they took the meat of that grant and the MDOL has applied for the Good Challenge grant which Erin wrote a letter of support for and will keep everyone informed on the outcome of that. We did not get the WANTO grant, but she thanked everyone who supported us. She met with a woman who was at the Common Ground Fair talking about women in the trades and will work with her on this. She is also working with someone from the We Built It company and Kelly Sandman who she is talking to. ARPA, we got the extension through 2026 to spend the money on marketing and transportation.
- **Board Membership:** The Board is full! Bobbi Avery from Days Jewelry will be attending the upcoming board meeting. We've got to replace Bruce Tisdale who has not attended a meeting since 2022. She will be looking for a replacement. Laurie asked what role he plays on board, but Erin stated that we do not need to fill the Manufacturing area and can look at what sector we are missing for a new member. She will send the list and what sectors are covered for a more targeted approach.
- **Marketing Campaign:** Focus groups have been completed via ZOOM and the results were very good for moving forward with a campaign strategy both on social media and web search options. Laurie said she was surprised at the insight and discussion on barriers they have and that they are looking at or at least thinking about employment and that the lack of personal interaction is playing a large part in the disconnect. The youth gave opinions on how best to reach youth through this campaign and the wording of the advertising around "real job" versus "good job" and other verbiage. Laurie said that having EMDC's staff Brianna was helpful with seeing what attracts young people who are looking for support services and employment. She is 19 and fits into the youth we are focusing on reaching and helping. The creative aspects and landing page are complete, and the next steps are to launch the google search links, social media and posters to kick off the campaign and last until end of March with 7million impressions with 7,000 clicks into the landing page where the EMDC form will be. The response from EMDC will need to be immediate so she is checking that they are ready for that.

Cathy asked about the frustrations mentioned and Laurie said that not only are youth frustrated with the lack of in-person application and personal contact, but also with a lack of communication after applying. They also stated a lot of employers are not hired but doing an application hold which is frustrating as they want to work. Cathy and Chris mentioned that they have seen in-person touches with mailings yielded more success over anything they've done online, and they see how that "old fashion" way of connecting makes the biggest impact for results.

Erin will send along information on the remaining agenda items covering performance measures and the results for America since it was not covered in the meeting to allow for the committee to discuss healthcare plan selections.

Adjourn

Cathy Witherspoon adjourned the meeting at 9:34am.

Next full board boarding meeting: Thursday, October 24, 2024, 8:30am-10:30am via ZOOM

Next Operations Committee meeting: Wednesday, November 13, 8:30am-9:30am via ZOOM